

#3

SERIAL WORLD

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CLIFFHANGING NEWS FOR SERIAL
FANDOM FOLLOWERS

CHAPTER BLASTS FROM FANDOM FOLLOWERS



ERIC HOFFMAN, KIRK ALYN AND RALPH HODGES SEEN DURING SERIAL PANEL AT 1974 SAN DIEGO COMIC CONVENTION

SERIAL EDITORIAL

BY ERIC HOFFMAN

Before we proceed any further, a brief word, from a personal point of view, about the serial. It has been looked upon, by many film historians and film goers, as either 'strictly for the kids', trash or beneath notice. Until recent years, it was virtually ignored, despite the fact that in many cases, it provided kind of a training ground for actors, directors, stunt men, technicians and God knows how many film people. It is also possibly one of the most difficult genres to write for. During the 20s and 30s, and even part of the 40s, before it was considered only for the youngsters, the serial was enjoyed by all ages. Adults as well as their offspring got a kick out of chewing their nails to the knuckles wondering if their favorite hero (or heroine, as the case may be) take Frances Gifford, for example, as 'Nyoka' in 'Jungle Girl.' In her jungle mini-skirt and with her definitely female figure, she could send the most staid adult male mentally drooling when he wasn't gasping at the various perils of hostile natives, etc., that warning 'See chapter . . . next week at this theater.'

If you really think about it, it took a lot of skill to create an action-adventure drama that would pull an audience back for 12 to 15 weeks and maintain interest almost without lag. Plot developments had to be many, the perils increasingly unnerving and the villains and tormenters they inflicted had to be the weirdest, wildest and nastiest since the Marquis De Sade. It took ability, planning and skill to make a good chap-terplay. . . and, fortunately, we have quite a few good ones to enjoy.

Thanks to such people as Alan Barbour in New York and Robert Malcomsen and his labor-of-love publication 'Those Enduring Matinee Idols', a definite interest in this genre has developed. . . and not among kids. Adults who remember their Saturday matinees (I feel sorry for the youngsters who missed that particular form of Saturday madness), people who have just discovered the fun and excitement of a well-produced adventure, even educators, writers, professional people, etc. all seem to have become 'hooked' on this type of fun. With all the trouble and 'habits' in the world today, I can't think of a nicer habit than to let your emotions 'hang out' vicariously.

SERIAL SHOWCASE

By Jeff Walton

Well, here we go again. Nice to be back and I must say I'm rather proud of this issue of SERIAL WORLD. First off, I'd like to dedicate the issue to the biggest expert on SERIALS in the World today, Mr. Eric Hoffman. Without Eric SERIAL WORLD would be in trouble. Always ready to help, Eric has been a big force behind the continuation of this fanzine.

The article on the back page was taken from DAILY VARIETY — Vol 164 No. 16 on Thursday, June 27th 1974. Read it over and let me know if you have heard anything about World Entertainment Corporation. You can be sure that we will be right on top of any more breaking stories of this nature.

As most of you know we are now printing SERIAL WORLD on a rather irregular basis. As it is just a hobby for me I must find the time to get everything together along with trying to distribute the zine. Hope you'll be patient as all good things take time.

SUBSCRIPTIONS.ALMOST EVERY SERIAL WORLD READER WANTS TO KNOW WHEN WE WILL TAKE SUBSCRIPTIONS. WE HOPE BY THE TIME OUR NEXT ISSUE REACHES YOU THAT WE WILL HAVE AN ANSWER. RIGHT NOW SERIAL WORLD IS ONLY AVAILABLE ON AN ISSUE BY ISSUE BASIS. PLEASE KEEP THIS IN MIND BEFORE SEND-

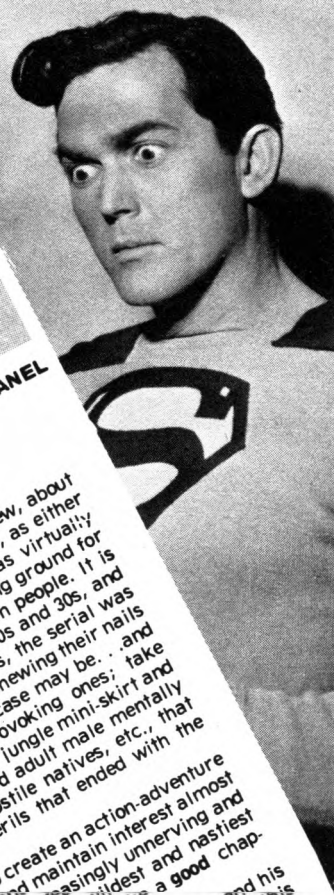
ING ME LARGE SUMS OF MONEY. Next issue. . . which should be ready around January or February will contain a very complete synopsis of SUPERMAN so tell your friends and be sure to order your copy.

And if you are a complete SERIAL nut like I am you'll want to subscribe to my good friend Bob Malcomsen's labor of love "THOSE ENDURING MATINEE IDOLS" or T.E.M.I. A years subscription of TEMI is \$6.00 - 38559 Asbury Park

Drive, Mount Clemens, Michigan 48043. In this way you'll be supporting SERIAL FANDOM even further.

Advertising rates are as follows for SERIAL WORLD . . . Full Page - \$40.00 HALF PAGE . . . \$20.00 . . . 1/4 PAGE - \$10.00 — CLASSIFIED ADS - 10c a word. Please make all CHECKS out to JEFF WALTON . . . THANKS.

Again I'd appreciate hearing from you after you read this issue. Your comments and suggestions are always welcome.





SERIAL WORLD INTERVIEWS HARRY LAUTER

BY JIM HITT

The following interview with Harry Lauter took place at his art studio in Sherman Oaks, California. When I walked into his shop I found him in the back busily painting away on a seascape, yet he was kind and generous with his time and allowed me to tape the interview.

Two "Tom's" battle it out. Harry Lauter as "Tom" Rogers fights for life with "Tom" Steele as villain Gursan in scene from chapter three "Five Fathoms Down", Trader Tom of the China Seas - 1953 Republic

"TRADER TOM OF THE CHINA SEAS"

STORY

WHEN foreign agents begin smuggling arms and munitions to subversive native groups in the Asian coastal country of Burma, where a revolution is being hatched, the United Nations takes steps to safeguard the peace of this Protectorate and neighboring countries.

Volunteering to aid in this crisis are two Americans: Tom, an intrepid young island trader, and Vivian, whom he saves when enemy agents wreck the schooner in which her father was trying to collect information for the United Nations.

They go into action immediately when news reaches them that a cargo of poison gas is being smuggled in on a steamer. A terrific struggle rages after they get aboard, during which the ship is scuttled on a reef. When the enemy agents attempt to salvage the cases of poison gas, Tom blows it up with expert rifle fire.

Turning their activities to a neighboring country, the enemy soon has a revolt ready to break out. Tom and Vivian, through a series of violent but successful maneuvers, bring in United Nations troops, and the rebels are soon captured.

Tom and Vivian return to Burma just in time to thwart another attempt to smuggle in explosives, and when the desperate enemy agents catch them in a death trap, they manage to save themselves while their adversaries meet their just fate.

CAST

Tom Rogers HARRY LAUTER
Vivian Wells ALINE TOWNE
Barent LYLE TALBOT
Major Conroy ROBERT SHAYNE
Kurt Daley FRED GRAHAM
Rebel Chief RICHARD REEVES
Gursan TOM STEELE
Bill Gaines JOHN CRAWFORD
Native DALE VAN SICKEL
Wang VICTOR SEN YUNG
Khan JAN ARVAN
British Colonel RAMSEY HILL
Ole GEORGE SELK

CREDITS

Associate Producer and
Director Franklin Adreon
Written by Ronald Davidson
Unit Manager Roy Wade
Photographed by Bud Thackery
Art Director Frank Hotelling
Music R. Dale Butts
Assistant Director Robert Shannon
Sound Earl Crain, Sr.
Set Decorations John McCarthy,
Jr., Bertram Granger
Film Editor Cliff Bell, A.C.E.
Special Effects
Howard and Theodore Lydecker
Makeup Supervision Bob Mark
Optical Effects
Consolidated Film Industries

RCA Sound System
A Republic 12 Chapter Serial



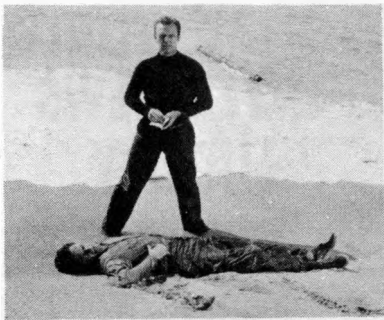
HARRY LAUTER AND ALINE
TOWNE

"TRADER TOM"

Q — Can you give us some background on yourself.

A — I was born in New York, and moved to Colorado at a very young age. I lived there twelve or fourteen years. I spent most of my summer vacations up in Cody, Wyoming. My father was an artist. I attended the Balboa College of Fine Arts. Also I took courses in drama and public speaking at all times. Just prior to the war I did four years of summer sock at Martha's Vineyard. I did several Broadway shows and was brought out to Hollywood by Fox in 1946 as a comedian from a show called THE MOON IS BLUE, but I wound up as a cowboy. I was under contract at Fox for a year, but I wasn't doing anything, just drawing a salary, and I don't care what you are, whether you're a plumber or whatever, you need to use the tools of your trade or you forget them. I asked for a release, and at that time I didn't want to go back to New York. I asked myself what they were doing out here in Hollywood at the time, and the answer was, of course, westerns.

Q — What were some of your first roles.
A — I did the first LONE RANGER with Clayton Moore and Jay Silverheels. I was under contract to Autry for about four or five years, at which time I did ANNIE OAKLEY, DEATH VALLEY DAYS, THE RANGE RIDER, BUFFALO BILL. Autry



CHAPTER ONE: "SEA SABOTEURS"

had a stock company with such people as Lane Bradford, who recently passed away, Myron Healey, Roy Barcroft, and myself. Alan Hale, Jr. used to do some of the stuff with us. We'd play the guy in the white hat in one and the guy in the black hat in the other.

Q — You did two series on TV didn't you?

Yes. My first series was *WATERFRONT* with Preston Foster in which I played his son. We did 140 of these for Hal Roach, who was the producer. Then I signed to do *TALES OF THE TEXAS RANGERS* and did 185 of these.

Q — How many westerns have you been in altogether.

I've done close to a thousand westerns all told. Of course most of these were for television. Although not in the same capacity as John Wayne, I've made a heck of a lot more westerns than he has. I enjoy doing them.

Q — You were in several serials at Republic studios.

A — I did two of the last serials at Republic, *TRADER TOM OF THE CHINA SEAS* and *KING OF THE CARNIVAL*. I was in other serials there, but I can't think of the titles. (ed. note *FLYING DISC MAN FROM MARS* in which Mr. Lauter played Drake, a henchman for the villain, and *CANADIAN MOUNTIES VS. ATOMIC INVADERS* in which he played a Mountie.)



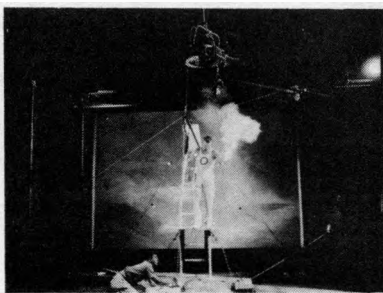
SCENE FROM "KING OF THE CARNIVAL" (NOTE PADDING BELOW)

Q — Have you seen any of your serials lately.

A — No, but I'll tell you a thing that happened on *TRADER TOM*. I met a fan of mine at one of the art shows, and he said, "Gee, Mr. Lauter, I saw you in one of your films the other night." I asked him what it was and he said *TRADER TOM*. Come to find out they put twelve episodes together and made a feature out of it. You know that every episode ended with me

going over a cliff in a burning car or being tied to a railroad track. It was a cliff-hanger to draw people back the following Saturday. So every eight minutes in the film I was being strangled or choked or something. I asked this fan what time the TV station showed it and he said 2:30 in the morning, which I was thankful for.

Actually I never watch myself. When I first came out I would go to see the rushes every day, and I found that I'm such a critic that I'd see one day's rushes and I'd think — 'Why did I do that?' The next day I'd do something different, so by the end of the picture I'd wind up having done eight different characterizations.



PROCESS SCREEN AND TECHNICIAN WERE NOT SEEN IN FINAL PRINT

Q — Looking back now, do you see any value in serials?

A — We should have our serials again. It was a great thing for people. We could get away from our normal life, our living every day. We all have enough problems as it is. People say to me today. 'Mr. Lauter, when are you going to make some more westerns?'

Q — What do you think of films today?

A — I won't do some of the pictures being made today.

Q — Do you remember much about directors of the serials at Republic?

A — Freddie Brannon, of course. He came up through the ranks as a cameraman and then as an assistant director. Many of the great ones in the business have done it that way. Freddie was a task master and hard to work with. I think he demanded things from people that weren't necessary.

Q — Was Republic an efficient studio?

A — Serials were really television. We were making twelve episodes in three weeks, sometimes two. They had the best prop men, the best special effects men, the best people in the business. The studio fell apart, of course, for reasons we won't go into here. All these good people



TOM AND VIVIAN TRUST BARENT (LYLE TALBOT)



KURT (FRED GRAHAM) AND GURSAN (TOM STEELE) UP TO NO GOOD.

Columbia grabbed, Revue grabbed. Now many of the good people who are making it with *GUNSMOKE*, *BONANZA*, *THE LONE RANGER* and others come from Republic.

Q — The serials that you appeared in had a great deal of stock footage. They were on their way out by that time, of course. Were there other ways which they cut corners to save money.

A — Republic was a great one for doing that. For instance, on *KING OF THE CARNIVAL*, they had this trapeze work. I was only going to be twelve feet up in the air, but as far as the camera was concerned I was at the top of the tent. I had to go from one platform to the other. A couple of days before we shot the scene I asked if I could get the setup to practice. I was told no, that they couldn't afford it. I would get it the day we shot.

Q — Did you ever do any of your own stunts?

A — I did do many of my own stunts. There was one episode in *KING OF THE CARNIVAL* I remember very vividly. I was supposed to slide down this guide wire which stretched about 70 feet from the top of the stage down to the bottom where some mattresses were piled up. I had rigged up a pipe over the wire and taped it. A wardrobe man told me I had better tuck in my tie. I was in a full suit at the time. I was in a hurry to get the shot and I said no, let's go ahead and get it over with. They took me up on a camera boom, right to the top of the stage. I leaned over the wire, the director asked if I was ready, and I said let's do it. I grabbed the pipe, started to slide, the tie went into the pipe and wrapped around the cable which jerked my arms loose. I'm strangling. Fortunately the boom came up right between my legs and lifted me up. Otherwise I could see the trades carrying the story the next morning, "Lauter Killed in Freak Accident."

Q — Were you ever hurt doing your own stunts?

A — Most of the things that happened to me then were well controlled. I was working with stuntman Davie Sharpe and Jock Mahoney. Both were the best in the business.

The only time I was ever hurt was by another actor, never by a stuntman. I refuse to do things with actors because they get to believe their own reviews.

I worked with every stuntman in the business and grabbed a little bit off each one. But to me Davie Sharpe is the best all around. He could do almost anything.

Q — In your two serials you were the good guy but you've also played a number of villains. Which do you prefer?

A — I'd rather be the heavy. You always know what's going to happen to the guy in the white hat. The heavy gives you more freedom. You can give a different interpretation each time you do something. He's also remembered more by fans. A man walked up to me once and said, "I've hated your guts for twenty-five years." and I said, "Thank you." It was a compliment.

Q — Did playing villains ever cause you personal problems outside the movie business?

A — My daughter came home from the first grade — she's twenty-three now — and she said, "None of the girls at school will talk to me because you're such a mean man. You try to kill Roy Rogers or Lassie every week. Why don't you try to be a nice man?" I told her that if I tried to be a nice man she wouldn't be in a private school.

Q — Did you enjoy the films you made at Republic?

A — We had fun making pictures then. People don't have fun making them anymore. We used to work hard like Trojans.

Republic had this place called Panic Peak. If the sun started to go down, up to the top of this mountain we'd go to get the last rays. Or else if you were on a porch, they'd put you on an apple box to get that twelve inches more of sun and tell you to talk fast.

Q — You worked with a great many of the stars at Republic, such as Rocky Lane who passed away recently, Bill Elliot, and many others.

A — I liked the guy but Rocky was a hard one to work with. After Republic closed down it was pretty hard for him to find a job. He finally landed the part of the voice of Mr. Ed. He came in here a couple of times and I got him a job on the LONE RANGER.

Sunset Carson, Clayton Moore, Duncan Renaldo — I've enjoyed working with most all of them. I've had a marvelous time and I don't regret one single minute of it. I wish it were going by again.

Q — Did you ever work with Roy Barcroft?

A — I must have made fifty pictures with Roy. He was a very, very, nice person. And he was a good actor, but he never really had the opportunity until the latter part of his life when he got some real good parts. A good actor can get typed cast.

Q — Do you think that happened to you?

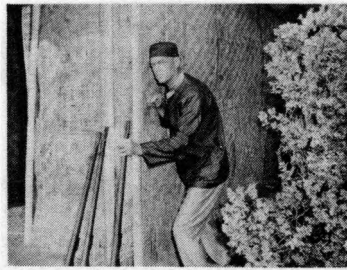
A — I had agent problems. I was with agents that didn't know how to handle a client. People today say the reason I didn't make it as a superstar was that I was handled wrong. I worked more than anybody in the business. I used to run around with scripts hanging under my arms. I left one agent because he made a deal that they could have me if they took two of his other clients. I was never that big to tie two other people to my coattails. An agent is a necessary evil. I can't go in and say I'm the world's greatest actor, but an agent can say it for me.

Q — What projects are in the works for you now?

A — I just finished a CHOPPER ONE. I may be going to India for a film, but I don't know. When I first came out here, it used to kill me when I didn't get a part, but not now.

Q — Of all the roles you've ever played, are there any which are your favorites?

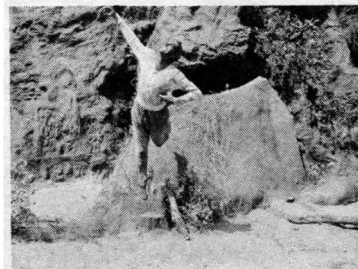
A — I don't have any favorites, not really. I just love to act.



TOM STEELE AS VILLAIN "GURSAN" FROM TRADER TOM OF THE CHINA SEAS.



END OF CHAPTER "7" TOM ROGERS ABOUT TO FALL OFF CLIFF INTO FIRE (NOTE ROOT ON SIDE OF HILL, THAT'S HOW TOM SURVIVES IN EPISODE "8").



ALTHOUGH IT IS ONLY A FEW FEET TO THE GROUND IN THE FINAL PRINT, IT LOOKS AS IF GURSAN MEETS HIS DOOM AFTER BEING SHOT BY FALLING OFF A HIGH CLIFF.



IN CHAPTER 12 "TWISTED VENGEANCE" BARENT AND KURT MEET THEIR DOOM (NOTE STUNT-MEN)

SERIAL AND THE "B" WESTERN STARS

BY BRUCE FURMAN
PART TWO

After Crash Corrigan played alongside Livingston for fifteen films and Ralph Byrd for one, John Wayne replaced Livingston in the Stoney Brooke role in eight films. Wayne fit in well with the Three Mesquiteers image and his performances in these films were more satisfying than in his earlier westerns for Lone Star-Monogram Pictures.

To Corrigan's detriment and private consternation, it became more obvious with Wayne than it had been with Livingston that Corrigan was receiving second billing.

After completing eight films in the series with Wayne, Corrigan left in 1939 dissatisfied he was not getting the star billing he felt he deserved. His career as a Three Mesquiteer ended, Corrigan was to embark the following year on a venture that would establish him as an even more popular western star.

Max Terhune, the third member of the Three Mesquiteers, made his film debut in a 1936 Gene Autry film, "Ride Ranger, Ride". Shortly afterwards, he was chosen to play Lullaby Joslin, succeeding Syd Saylor who lasted but one film. A clever magician and ventriloquist, Terhune's trademark was a dummy named Elmer, who accompanied him everywhere.

After Wayne succeeded Livingston in the series, Terhune made six films after which time his contract expired. In negotiating a new contract, an impasse was reached over Terhune's salary, with Republic primarily being at fault. Since Republic reportedly sought to restrict Terhune in his entertainment career outside the sphere of the Three Mesquiteers, he left the studio. Republic then signed Raymond Hatton to replace Terhune in the final two Wayne-Corrigan films of the series.

Though several other actors portrayed the Three Mesquiteers in various trios in the early forties, it was the original trio, including the Wayne films, which achieved the greatest success. Thus, the Three Mesquiteers story will stop here with the complete disintegration of the original trio.

It will suffice to say that from 1936-43, Republic used eleven different actors and had eight different trios for the Three Mesquiteers films. In all, Republic made fifty-one Three Mesquiteers films.

Of the films made by the original trio, "Riders of the Whistling Skull," 1937, is probably the best. This unique western had the trio joining an expedition searching for a lost tribe of Indians whose city is protected by a large rock formation resembling a skull, which produces a whistling sound caused by the winds. Add to this a mysterious killer eliminating members of the expedition and it makes for a great film.

Of the John Wayne films, "Wyoming Outlaw," 1939, is the best. This film, which made a star out of Don "Red" Barry, had him portraying a farmer in the dust bowl region of Wyoming, who is forced to turn outlaw and subsequently hunted down and killed. Backed by a strong supporting cast, this is a fine film in every aspect.

HOW THE SERIALS RATE

BY CHUCK McCLEARY

CHUCK IS BACK AND HIS OPINIONS ARE HIS OWN.....

It is the purpose of this article to examine four different categories of sound serials. We will look at the 10 best serials, the 10 worst, the 10 most disappointing and the 10 best western serials in the opinion of this writer and researcher.

No producer, director or screenwriter ever set out to deliberately make a bad serial. However, the best of ideas can sometimes go astray, causing what might have been a good serial to be either mediocre or disappointing. The basic ingredients of a good serial are a good plot with a sufficient amount of action, performed by a competent cast in an attractive setting.

Acting is a subject not normally discussed in relation to serials. While it is painful to recall the emoting of Sammy Baugh in "King of the Texas Rangers", Baugh can be excused as he certainly laid no claims to being a professional actor. But what of Mala in "Robinson Crusoe of Clipper Island" and the renowned Jack Holt in "Holt of the Secret Service"? It is hard to imagine two worse performances. If a serial was at least competently acted, viewers should consider themselves fortunate and let it go at that.

There are no serials from the 1950's listed among the 10 worst serials, although there easily could have been. Serials produced in the 1950's didn't have much chance to be anything but bad as studios were cutting cost to the bone and using an excessive amount of stock footage.

For purposes of classification, modern westerns such as "King of the Royal Mounted", "King of the Mounties" and "King of the Texas Rangers" were excluded from the list of 10 best westerns. Only western serials taking place in the old west were considered.

The 10 Best Serials

1. Flash Gordon (1936) - Buster Crabbe.
2. The Adventures of Captain Marvel (1941) - Tom Tyler.
3. Dick Tracy Vs. Crime, Inc. (1941) - Ralph Byrd.

4. Daredevils of the Red Circle (1939) - Charles Quigley.
5. The Fighting Devil Dogs (1938) - Lee Powell.
6. The Green Hornet (1940) - Gordon Jones.
7. Dick Tracy (1937) - Ralph Byrd.
8. Mysterious Dr. Satan (1940) - Robert Wilcox.
9. The Lone Ranger (1938) - Lee Powell.
10. The Adventures of Smilin' Jack (1943) - Tom Brown.

(1.) "Flash Gordon". . . a science fiction and fantasy masterpiece, well acted with generally good special effects, this serial also remained quite true to the great Alex Raymond comic strip. (2.) "The Adventures of Captain Marvel". . . while definitely not true to the comic book format, this serial offers a fine combination of action, plot and suspense, with an extra tip of the hat to Dave Sharpe for his marvelous stunt work. (3.) "Dick Tracy Vs. Crime, Inc.". . . outstanding special effects as Dick Tracy battles the invisible Ghost in the best of the four Dick Tracy serials. (4.) "Daredevils of the Red Circle". . . features the best cliff-hanger of all-time at the end of chapter one as hero Charles Quigley on a motorcycle tries to outrace a flood in an undersea tunnel. (5.) "The Fighting Devil Dogs". . . features one of the all-time great serial villains, The Lightning along with a fine plot and some outstanding special effects. (6.) "The Green Hornet". . . a great mystery, suspense and action serial, well made and well acted (and the sequel was almost as good). (7.) "Dick Tracy". . . another great villain, The Lame One battles Dick in the first of the four great Dick Tracy serials. (8.) "Mysterious Dr. Satan". . . an outstanding action serial featuring an original masked serial hero, The Copperhead. (9.) "The Lone Ranger". . . the first serial ever to present the concept of a mystery hero, this was the best western serial ever filmed. (10.) "The Adventures of Smilin' Jack". . . the best war serial ever made, this serial was well acted and features an unusually fine supporting cast.



"SPY SMASHER" "MOST DISAPPOINTING"

The 10 Worst Serials

1. Phantom of the West (1930) - Tom Tyler.
2. The Phantom Empire (1935) - Gene Autry.
3. The Black Coin (1936) - Dave O'Brien.
4. Sign of the Wolf (1931) - Rex Lease.
5. Young Eagles (1934) - Jim Vance.
6. The Last Frontier (1932) - Lon Chaney, Jr.
7. Holt of the Secret Service (1941) - Jack Holt.
8. Who's Guilty? (1945) - Robert Kent.

(Continued on Page 7)



DICK TRACY - RALPH BYRD

9. Brick Bradford (1947) - Kane Richmond.
10. Call of the Savage (1935) - Noah Beery, Jr.

(1.) "Phantom of the West". . . a most ineptly made serial, topped off by the villain being captured five minutes into chapter 12, leaving 13 minutes of the most ridiculous nonsense to ever hit the screen. (2.) "The Phantom Empire". . . combines the worst elements of western movies, country music and science fiction. (3.) "The Black Coin". . . a respectable chapter one deteriorates into a boring and very slow paced serial. (4.) "Sign of the Wolf". . . poorly paced, cheaply produced and ineptly acted just about covers it. (5.) "Young Eagles". . . this Boy Scout serial tried to be different but failed miserably. (6.) "The Last Frontier". . . RKO's only serial featuring a Zorro-type western hero was very slowly paced and poorly acted. (7.) "Holt of the Secret Service". . . the worst serial ever made by one of the three major studios, one wonders what Jack Holt did to deserve this. (8.) "Who's Guilty?". . . the director, writers and actors were guilty of making a miserably bad serial. (9.) "Brick Bradford". . . the first five chapters are fairly good but the remaining 10 are simply awful. (10.) "Call of the Savage". . . based on the novel, Jan of the Jungle, this was a very routine and slowly paced serial.

The 10 Most Disappointing Serials

1. Spy Smasher (1942) - Kane Richmond.
2. The Spider Returns (1941) - Warren Hull.
3. Captain America (1944) - Dick Purcell.
4. Zorro Rides Again (1937) - John Carroll.
5. G-Men Vs. The Black Dragon (1943) - Rod Cameron.
6. Daughter of Don Q (1946) - Adrian Booth.
7. Adventures of Frank Merriwell (1936) - Don Briggs.
8. The Secret Code (1942) - Paul Kelly.
9. Captain Midnight (1942) - Dave O'Brien.
10. The Phantom Creeps (1939) - Bela Lugosi.

(1.) "Spy Smasher". . . a poor plot makes this a waste of a great comic character and a good cast. (2.) "The Spider Returns". . . a most unsatisfying sequel to a very good serial, "The Spider's Web". (3.) "Captain America". . . after viewing this mediocre serial, one can only wonder why the rights to this great comic book character were purchased if only to be misused in such a manner. (4.) "Zorro Rides Again". . . poorly plotted and slowly paced, this is the worst of the Zorro serials. (5.) "G-Men Vs. The Black Dragon". . . the most ludicrous set of villains imaginable help a good chapter one deteriorate into a very forgettable serial. (6.) "Daughter of Don Q". . . although many serials from the mid-forties were still quite good, this one had nothing in the way of plot or action to offer. (7.) "Adventures of Frank Merriwell". . . loosely based on the great series of boys books, this serial never seemed to know in which direction to go, e.g. sports or straight serial action. (8.) "The Secret Code". . . poorly plotted and directed, many of the chapters are quite repetitious. (9.) "Captain Midnight". . . another great comic and radio hero is wasted on the screen due to a hopelessly inept screenplay. (10.) "The Phantom Creeps". . . a generally misdirected effort by all concerned, this serial is slowly paced throughout and never really gets moving.

The 10 Best Western Serials

1. The Lone Ranger (1938) - Lee Powell.
2. Overland With Kit Carson (1939) - Bill Elliott.
3. Adventures of Red Ryder (1940) - Don "Red" Barry.
4. Zorro's Fighting Legion (1939) - Reed Hadley.
5. Valley of Vanishing Men (1942) - Bill Elliott.
6. The Great Adventures of Wild Bill Hickok (1938) - Bill Elliott.
7. The Phantom Rider (1936) - Buck Jones.
8. Riders of Death Valley (1941) - Dick Foran.
9. The Vigilantes Are Coming (1936) - Robert Livingston.
10. Rustlers of Red Dog (1935) - Johnny Mack Brown.



GREEN HORNET - GORDON JONES

(1.) "The Lone Ranger". . . the concept of a mystery hero and loads of action make this the best western serial and ninth best among all serials. (2.) "Overland With Kit Carson". . . the mystery villain isn't such a mystery to viewers with reasonably good eyesight but plenty of action and a good cast more than make up for this. (3.) "Adventures of Red Ryder". . . good plot, a fine cast and plenty of action bring Fred Harman's comic strip hero to the screen in grand style. (4.) "Zorro's Fighting Legion". . . easily the best of the Zorro Serials as the masked hero tangles with another great mystery villain, Don Del Oro. (5.) "Valley of Vanishing Men". . . a very fast paced serial, well acted and some unusual twists of plot. (6.) "The Great Adventures of Wild Bill Hickok". . . in addition to putting its star, Bill Elliott on the road to bigger and better things, this well made serial has plenty of action and some excellent cliffhangers. (7.) "The Phantom Rider". . . this was the best of the Buck Jones serials as it was faster paced and contained more action than his other serials. (8.) "Riders of Death Valley". . . the finest cast ever to appear in a serial plus a good plot and some scenic locations made this a rousing action serial. (9.) "The Vigilantes Are Coming". . . a forerunner of the Zorro serials, Robert Livingston appears as The Eagle in this very good western serial. (10.) "Rustlers of Red Dog". . . a fast paced story and plenty of action make this the best of the Johnny Mack Brown western serials.

SERIAL WORLD INTERVIEWS

John HART

BY GREG JACKSON JR.

★ HAWKEYE

★ LONE RANGER

★ CAPTAIN AFRICA

★ JACK ARMSTRONG



JOHN HART IS JACK ARMSTRONG

A COLUMBIA SERIAL

John Hart attended South Pasadena High School and, along with fellow classmate William Holden, took drama in his senior year. Soon he appeared in plays at the famous Pasadena Playhouse. John's first movie was Cecil B. DeMille's *THE BUCCANEER* made in 1937. He was under contract to Paramount until World War II. During the war he produced and directed plays for the service, acted in radio, appeared in training films, and saw action on Okinawa. After the war he did a western at Universal and then Columbia's *THE LAST OF THE REDMEN* starring Jon Hall. He then starred in his first serial, *JACK ARMSTRONG*. John also appeared in such Columbia serials as *BRICK BRADFORD*, *PIRATES OF THE HIGH SEAS*, *THE GREAT ADVENTURES OF CAPTAIN KIDD*, and starred in one of the last serials, *ADVENTURES OF CAPTAIN AFRICA*. On TV he starred one season as *THE LONE RANGER* with Jay Silverheels and also starred in *THE HAWKEYE* and *THE LAST OF THE MOHICANS* series with Lon Chaney, Jr. Today John is still very active in movies and TV. He is also the owner and president of "John Hart Films" which produces TV commercials (including those for Montgomery Ward), and industrial and educational films. He has just produced a pilot for a children's show for the 1975-1976 network TV season and has high hopes for it. John was kind enough to give me this interview for *SERIAL WORLD*.

Q: Did you do a screen test for JACK ARMSTRONG?

JH: I had had an acting background: at the Pasadena Playhouse, a couple years at Paramount, and in *THE LAST OF THE REDMEN* not only did I double Jon Hall, but I had a part in it. So they knew I could deliver at least something.

Q: So you think they looked at *THE LAST OF THE REDMEN* and thought of you from that?

JH: Yeah. I think they probably considered a lot of people but one day Katzman called me in and I think I read some scenes from it with Pierre Watkin and he asked me if I'd like to do it. I said, "Of course, I'd love to do it." You know, serials were going full blast and that was like an invitation for pretty good employment. I knew I wasn't going to win the Academy Award, but it was fun. I always enjoyed working very much.

Q: Jack Armstrong was supposed to be a high school student and you were about 27 or 28 at the time. Did anybody bring that up?

JH: No, it was never mentioned by anybody. I guess they just assumed I looked enough like it. Now if you look at pictures from the serial, I look like a high school kid.

Q: Charles Middleton played Jason Grood in the serial. Do you remember anything about him?

JH: Oh, Charlie Middleton was marvelous. He was a pleasant, nice guy; of course, very competent. I never really got to know Charlie. I just worked with him and I don't think I was in too many scenes that he was in; we just weren't thrown together very much.

Q: What about Pierre Watkin who played Uncle Jim?

JH: I got to know him quite well; I went to a lot of places with him. He used to own race horses and loved to talk about them. He was just a jolly, very pleasant guy.

Q: Jack Ingram played Blair and Eddie Parker played Slade in JACK ARMSTRONG. Did you know them?

JH: Jack Ingram and I were very good friends; he was just a lot of fun. Eddie Parker, Jack Ingram, and I bummed around together. We always worked for Katzman at Columbia all the time. Jack and I were always playing tricks and jokes on each other and having a few belts after the day's work. Jack died many years ago and it was sad because he was really a good friend. I know a lot of actors and I've liked most of them. They're pleasant, nice, entertaining people but I never had too many actors who were really close friends—they're always out of the business. But Jack and Eddie were pretty good friends.

Q: What can you tell me about Rosemary LaPlanche who played Betty and Joe Brown, Jr. who played Billy?

JH: I still talk to Rosemary once in a while. She was really a neat girl. I got to know Joe Brown, Jr. quite well. He was not Joe E. Brown's son at all; he wasn't even related.

Q: Did you as a child listen to JACK ARMSTRONG on radio?

JH: Yeah, kind of. I never really paid attention to it. I was never one for coming home and gluing myself to the radio. As a kid I was an avid reader until I got big enough to get involved in basketball, baseball, and football. I remember hearing the *JACK ARMSTRONG* radio show but I can't say I listened to it a lot.

Q: I think it's interesting to note that the JACK ARMSTRONG radio show, which had begun in 1933, dropped Uncle Jim, Billy, and Betty in the late 1940's and added the character of Vic Hardy. The serial, surprisingly, had the original characters but it had Vic Hardy in it too. Did anybody from the radio show ever come and discuss things with you?

JH: No, I never talked to anybody from the radio show.

Q: So, to your knowledge, they didn't even offer any premiums on the radio show in connection with the serial?

JH: No.

Q: Your wife told me that the first time she ever saw you was in JACK ARMSTRONG when she was 9. Did you ever see any chapters of JACK ARMSTRONG yourself?

JH: Oh sure. At that time I lived around the corner not too far



**JOHN CRAWFORD (CAPT Kidd) AND JOHN HART
REASON IN ADVENTURES OF CAPTAIN KIDD**



PRINCESS ALURA (CLAIRE JAMES) AND JACK ARMSTRONG ARE TORTURED BY EXPERT KNIFE THROWERS

away from the old Forum Theater on Pico Blvd. which was a beautiful theater; they had many premieres there. Anyway, JACK ARMSTRONG ran there. The kids down there found out where I lived—I don't know how. I think the first show was 11 o'clock in the morning. When it was over, this whole gang of kids would come up to the house and stand out in front. My grandmother got a big kick out of it and we'd peek out the window. Pretty soon after a little elbowing and shoving, one kid would be delegated to come ring the bell and ask if I was home. If I was, I'd come out and they would all stand around me. They'd want to know how I got out of whatever the calamity was. I'd talk to them and it was really a lot of fun.

Q: Did you try and be very serious while doing unbelievable things in a serial?

JH: You had to take it seriously; if you didn't, you couldn't do it.

Q: But between scenes when you weren't filming, did you kid around a lot?

JH: Oh sure, we had a lot of laughs. It was hard to keep a straight face. But when you were on camera you just absolutely had to be deadly serious.

Q: How did you kill time between scenes while filming a serial?

JH: There wasn't any time between scenes. I was always trying to learn my lines for the next one if anything. I had one funny thing happen on JACK ARMSTRONG. They had two units and they tried to utilize people who weren't working. The first unit would have sound and dialogue and the second unit would be all the fights and stuff like that they could put the sound on. I was supposed to fight all these guys on the back of a truck for the second unit. Every time we'd get set up to do it, the first unit would send a car or somebody would come running over and I'd have to run back to the first unit. We'd be doing everything all at once. So finally after about four times of this I said, "I'll tell you what—just drive the truck over to the first unit and we'll shoot the fight on the way." And they said, "Good idea!" So even my transportation time was utilized whenever it could be.

Q: Did you ever get injured while filming JACK ARMSTRONG?

JH: We had some explosions in JACK ARMSTRONG. I actually got all the hair burned off my arms and my eyebrows singed in one of those. I remember I had to get blown out a door and I got good and singed.

Q: Any other comments about JACK ARMSTRONG?

JH: I must say that doing the lead in JACK ARMSTRONG boosted my career to a pretty good degree. But I found out a strange thing. I was doing the lead, learning all the dialogue, and doing all the stunts in the closeups—I fought all the natives and did all the stuff. The guy who was doubling me, Jack Buchanan, would just do the stunts in the long shots. And I found out that this guy was making exactly the same amount of money that I was and maybe a little more because I had a flat deal and he was getting overtime. So I got into a bunch of westerns playing the heavy and I'd get paid so much a day for the part. Then I'd do the stunts—so there was always a good, fat stunt check. Now very wisely they would save the stunts until the last day of the picture so if you'd hurt yourself, they had it in the can. So the last day was pretty hectic. I made quite a good living through the forties.

Q: In 1947 you appeared in the serial BRICK BRADFORD starring Kane Richmond. Did you know him?

JH: I couldn't tell you too much; I didn't know him too well.

INTERVIEW WITH JOHN HART (CONTINUED)

Q: How about Rick Vallin who played Sandy Sanderson?

JH: Rick Vallin was a very close friend of mine. We became friends when he did the Indian in THE LAST OF THE REDMEN. He was quite a fisherman; we used to go surf fishing around on boats. I guess I haven't seen Rick in 15 to 20 years.

Q: Charles King was also in BRICK BRADFORD.

JH: Charlie was just great; he was fun. He drank a little as did a lot of these guys.

Q: Did Katzman mind his actors drinking?

JH: You didn't last too long drinking around Katzman. He just would not put up with a boozier. You'll notice almost all of his pictures and serials had quite a few of the same actors because he knew they were reliable and, of course, time was money. So he just wouldn't put up with any drinking while working; he didn't give a damn what you did after—in fact, most of the guys were pretty good boozers after work but nobody drank while he worked. Now poor old Charlie toward the last of his career was nipping a little toward the end of the day. But he was a jolly guy and we all just loved him. He had a deathly fear of snakes and somebody, without fail, during the course of any picture, would throw a snake or a piece of rope and Charlie would just climb the nearest tree hollering and yelling. I thought a lot of Charlie and he was pleasant to work with.

Q: I've met George DeNormand who was also in BRICK BRADFORD. Do you remember him?

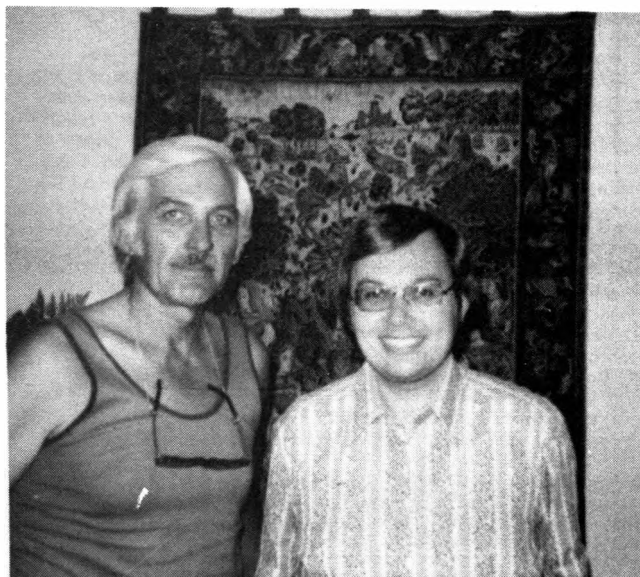
JH: I still see George once in a while; he's just a fantastic guy. He would do some pretty hefty stunts. I'll never forget we were up in Kernville—I have no idea what picture it was—and George and I were Indians. George was supposed to get shot out of a tree way up there. He fell a good 20-25 feet out of the tree and a limb hit him that he didn't figure on and he landed on top of his head on a big branch just before he hit the ground. We all thought it had killed him. But he got up and shook himself and went right on with the day's work. I think he had a bad neck for a good 6 months. You know his nickname was "George DeMattress" because he'd have the prop man put a ton of mattresses down any place he had to fall. If he had to fall off a horse, he'd get a ditch somewhere and fill it up with mattresses. He was a little older than the rest of us; I guess he didn't bounce so good.

Q: You are listed at the bottom of the cast of the 1950 Columbia serial PIRATES OF THE HIGH SEAS starring Buster Crabbe.

JH: Oh my God, I don't even remember working in it!

Q: In 1953 you were featured in the Columbia serial THE GREAT ADVENTURES OF CAPTAIN KIDD starring Richard Crane. Do you remember anything interesting about that serial?

JH: Katzman was great for getting a lot of stock footage from big pictures; then we'd do the inserts. In that serial he had two big pirate vessels. One pirate vessel would pull up alongside the other and they'd throw grappling hooks and we'd all swing across with swords in our teeth. We had the ships and everything blowing up

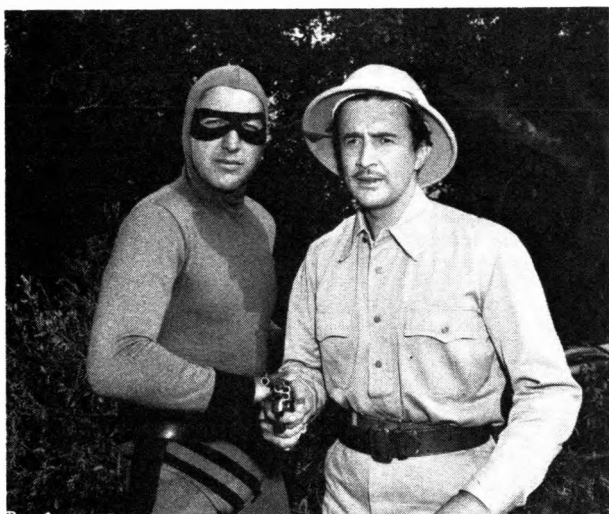


JOHN HART - 1974 WITH GREG JACKSON JR.

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- S.W. INTERVIEWS - JOHN HART

BY GREGORY R. JACKSON, JR.



RICK VALLIN WITH PHANTOM—CAPT. AFRICA ALIAS JOHNNY HART—RARE STILL BEFORE COSTUME CHANGE AND CAPTAIN AFRICA.

on a sound stage. We were doing closeups for stock footage and all these sails caught on fire and it set off the sprinkler system and completely doused the whole sound stage. About every fire engine in Hollywood showed up and Katzman was doing backflips because it was really screwing up his production. But it was kind of fun; we had a half a day off while they cleaned up the water and got the fire department out of there.

Q: Did you do any stunt work on a serial like that?

JH: Oh many, many times. Katzman would usually hire 4 or 5 stunt guys: myself, Wally West, George DeNormand, and Rube Schafer. We'd get signed on a contract to just do the stunts. So I did stunts in many pictures.

Q: Do you remember how you got the starring role in the ADVENTURES OF CAPTAIN AFRICA serial?

JH: No. I was just big and I could do all the dialogue in one take and all the stunts. So I was a good candidate for that.

Q: And I'm sure they wanted you to look like Tom Tyler from far away.

JH: Yeah, I guess they did with the suit on.

Q: You said JACK ARMSTRONG took about 6 weeks to film in 1947. CAPTAIN AFRICA was one of the last serials. How long did it take to film it in 1955?

JH: I think it was about 3 weeks.

Q: And in those 3 weeks you played "The Phantom," not "Captain Africa."

JH: That's right. Then they found out they couldn't clear the title.

Q: When did they find that out?

JH: Oh, it was a couple months after we shot it. So I came back and did the entire part over again in a 6-day week. I was in every shot; everything was just me with a different wardrobe. I fought gorillas, tigers, quicksand and I had just pages and pages of dialogue. If I went to the bathroom, the whole company had to stop because there was no shot that I wasn't in. They could use all the long shots; just the closeups had to be reshot. That was really a job!

Q: I bet you had a lot of overtime.

JH: Oh, did I! The cameras would roll at 8 a.m.—so I'd have to be there 6:30 or 7:00 and we'd work every night till 10 or 11 o'clock. I made a lot of money doing that. In those days, if you were under contract, you didn't get overtime until you put in 10 hours but then you got a lot of overtime.

Q: Do you know what your sequel to the original Phantom serial was supposed to be called?

JH: Katzman had it set as just THE PHANTOM.

Q: Well, they probably hadn't made a final decision then.

JH: Probably.

Q: Do you remember Bud Osborne who played Nat Coleman in the ADVENTURES OF CAPTAIN AFRICA?

JH: Bud Osborne was marvelous. I guess he was the dying

stagecoach driver in at least every other western that was ever made. Boy, he could die hard—it would take him 5 minutes to die. He was just a wonderful old guy.

Q: Terry Frost was with you in a lot of serials like CAPTAIN AFRICA, CAPTAIN KIDD, and PIRATES OF THE HIGH SEAS.

JH: Terry Frost was in everything! I've got to tell you a funny story about Terry Frost. He was almost as bad a talker as George DeNormand; they ran a close race. Terry and I were in a western where we were the bad guys; we had held up the stagecoach. I'm sure we shot and killed Bud Osborne—he died hard! (John was laughing hard at this point.) It was a whole elaborate thing; it took them hours to set up. Terry Frost was the bad guy who was supposed to shoot the padlock off the strongbox which in turn made the horses run away which in turn made somebody shoot somebody which in turn made the girl fall off the stagecoach. So Terry's talking to everybody, lost in some long story. Now Leonard Katzman, who was the assistant director, says to Terry, "Hey, Terry, are you ready?" And Terry thought he got the cue, not paying attention since he was busy talking, and he shoots his gun, the stagecoach runs away, the guy gets shot, the girl falls off, the horses run—and not a camera was turning! Oh God, it was a mess! That wasn't DeMille, that was a disaster for Katzman pictures. He had two cameras on it, so it took two hours to set it up again.

Q: You said you saw chapters of JACK ARMSTRONG. Did you see some of CAPTAIN AFRICA?

JH: No, I never did.

Q: Who doubled you in CAPTAIN AFRICA?

JH: I don't think I had a double; I did everything myself. You see, when you worked for Sam Katzman, you were in peril of actually losing your life—then he might get you a double! That's why he loved a guy like me; I could do anything for him.

Q: How would you compare the production values of the 1947 JACK ARMSTRONG vs. the 1955 ADVENTURES OF CAPTAIN AFRICA?

JH: JACK ARMSTRONG was a total serial in itself; I mean there were no stock shots of Arabs and the rest. God, CAPTAIN AFRICA—I don't know how the hell anybody could even follow the thing! They'd have a hundred Arabs charging across the desert and, oh God, all this stuff from all these other serials in stock footage. But JACK ARMSTRONG had nothing like that. They started from scratch and everything was shot for JACK ARMSTRONG. So productionwise, it was a total, complete production comparable to a low budget feature. But I think it was one of the most expensive serials ever made. I mean they did it right; everything was done really nice.

Q: So are you more proud of JACK ARMSTRONG or CAPTAIN AFRICA?

JH: I think JACK ARMSTRONG. I was a lot younger and we all tried to do a really good job of it. CAPTAIN AFRICA was not nearly as related to the real world as JACK ARMSTRONG. Now Jack did go up in a rocket but the stuff with Betty and Uncle Jim was kind of everyday things. It was more realistic—a little bit—if you can call any serial realistic.

Q: Did you really get to know Sam Katzman?

JH: He was an interesting man. I'd been to his home many times and had dinner with him through those years. We used to dive a lot; it was the early days of skin diving. He loved lobster. You know, he was a terrible horse player. We used to get resentful that we all slaved and worked for peanuts and he'd go out and spend it at Santa Anita. But he was all open and above board. I could always work with Sam. I could walk right into his office and he would always see me. "How are you, Johnny boy?" he used to say. He drove everybody crazy, I guess. Terry Frost used to carve hands giving you the finger and Sam had a cane with the finger on it and he'd wave that around at people. I could always get a job from Sam. Even if I didn't look like the part, he'd put me on whatever he was doing. So I really can't complain about Sam.

Q: Do you think serials were made too fast?

JH: A serial was made for little kids and, like many westerns, the main thing was to keep it moving. They didn't want to stop and dwell on the dumb story because half the time it didn't make sense. So everybody was rushing and fighting and trying to get into some place or out of some place. There really isn't any point in trying to make it too good; you'd be wasting your time. Of course it always seemed rushed and terrible but that's just what it was and it went into the can and came out of the studio and made money.

The End

COMING NEXT ISSUE - COMPLETE CHAPTER BY CHAPTER SYNOPSIS OF "SUPERMAN"

BY ERIC HOFFMAN

ALL ABOUT.....

SUPERMAN IN THE SERIALS -

BY ERIC HOFFMAN

Of the many comic strip 'super heroes' who have regaled readers through the decades, none has been as enduring as the character who literally "opened the way" for evil-fighters in flamboyant, usually far-out, costumes who were endowed with strange powers.

The grand-daddy of them all, the mighty Superman was created by the team of Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster, springing upon an unsuspecting world in the pages of ACTION COMICS in 1938. With the initial appearance of the man who was "faster than a speeding bullet, more powerful than a locomotive, able to leap tall buildings at a single bound," a new concept in comic strip heroes was born. Here was a character who probably embodied all the latent dreams of nearly every youngster and grown adult male. . .the desire to do the incredible (and near impossible as well). He was invulnerable, bullets bounced off him, weapons didn't hurt him, he flew through the air like a bird (at least, according to several comic fans and historians, after he propelled himself through the atmosphere via superpowerful leaps. . .something along the order of an anthropomorphic kangaroo), he was admired, women swooned — and Lois Lane kept leaping at him. Of course, the Clark Kent-Superman split personality identity has become a world-wide institution. The Man of Steel (or Man of Tomorrow, for an alternate referral) has been the subject of a classic series of cartoons during the early 40s



(released by Paramount, made by Max Fleisher's cartoon group), radio programs, records, books, several newspaper strips and of course his basic appearances in SUPERMAN, ACTION COMICS, WORLD FINEST COMICS, JUSTICE SOCIETY and JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA, as well as guest-supporting appearances in adventures of sidekicks Lois Lane, Jimmy Olsen, Batman and his young days in SUPERBOY. . .to name a few.

That he has remained probably one of the most popular, as well as influential, of the comic strip characters is a testimony to the creativity of his originators, but also to those who have followed Siegel and Shuster.

Prior to the classic 17 cartoons by Fleisher, it was inevitable that the Man of Steel would become the proposed subject of a serial. Characters like "Tailspin Tommy" and "Flash Gordon" had broken ground for the newspaper strip

heroes. And here was possibly the greatest challenge of all. . .the basic difficulty with a character such as Superman. One of the most important factors for a serial's hero is the fact that he can get the audience worried about his life being in constant peril. In this respect (not only film-wise but in the comic strips), Superman was his own worst enemy. His incredible "super"-invulnerability to any weapon of this world (or any other), at least until recent years, made it very difficult for an audience to become truly worried about his safety. Even his alter-ego of Clark Kent, "Mild Manner Reporter For the Daily Planet" never raised a goosepimple when he was in danger. Underneath the civilian trappings and glasses, it was still Superman. No change in physique or powers had occurred.

The studio interested in doing a version of DC's strip was Republic Pictures. Plotted during the 1940-41 period, the project never saw celluloid life. Some have said that DC wanted too much control over the plot line and how Superman would be handled. Needless to say, the film never materialized, which in its own way is a pity. One can only speculate as to what it would have been like. But with the first demise of Superman a la live filming, another super-hero took his place: Captain Marvel! The result was one of the best super-hero serials made.

In 1948, Superman was proposed as the subject of a chapter-play for the second time. By then, only two studios were actively engaged in making serials: Republic and Columbia Pictures. At this point in time, the 'B' picture division, in certain respects, and the serial department were run by veteran filmmaker Sam Katzman, or 'Jungle Sam' as some have referred to him — due to a long-running series of jungle adventures with Johnny Weissmuller as Jungle Jim. Katzman has been called everything from 'king of the quickies' to 'the budget king.' This was due to the fact that he was able to get more out of a production dollar than any producer in his particular area. Katzman's pictures generally came in on, or sometimes below, budget and, naturally, made a profit.

His film history is a well-known one. Besides his serials for Columbia (which included a good many DC comic strip



**SUPERMAN AMazes PROFESSOR LEEDS
(FORREST TAYLOR) BY LIFTING SAFE**

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≡ SUPERMAN IN THE SERIALS

(CONTINUED)



KIRK ALYN IS SUPERMAN IN THIS SUPER COLUMBIA CHAPTER PLAY

characters), Katzman had made several independent chapter-plays during the 30s, including "Shadows of Chinatown" (with Bela Lugosi) and "Blake of Scotland Yard" (with Ralph Byrd and Herbert Rawlinson). Under his Banner Productions group, Katzman came up with countless 'B' pictures, ranging from quickie-horror films, often starring Lugosi, a group of comedy-dramas featuring the main body of the old Dead End Kids, renamed the East Side Kids, and various small budget comedies, dramas, mysteries and some musicals.

In 1944, Katzman made his first serial for Columbia, "Brenda Starr, Reporter," based on the popular comic strip. Joan Woodbury and Kane Richmond starred. It was one of two serials that would part with Columbia usual 15 chapter format, running 12 episodes.

With "Superman," Katzman would come up with a serial that, in its own way, would earn a special place in chapter-play history. Adapting the character for the screen was the task of serial scribes George H. Plympton and Joseph Poland. After devising a mind-boggling melange of plot twists and perils (enough to make a Superman wince), Plympton and Poland turned things over to Lewis Clay, Arthur Hoerl and Royal Cole, who had written enough action material for just about every company that had made chapter thrillers.

Veteran serial-action director Spencer G. Bennet was teamed with Thomas Carr to direct the production. Carr would handle the second unit group, while Bennet, with his finely-honed ability to literally 'edit' the film while it was in the

camera and avoid, if possible, any unnecessary or wasted footage, would take care of the main portion of the production.

The cast itself was predominantly composed of performers who made up what some have called "Sam Katzman's stock company." Noel Neill, who had popped up in several features for Katzman (as well as the B-musical series "The Teenagers" with Freddie Stewart, June Preisser, Frankie Darro and Jackie Moran) and in the serial "Brick Bradford," as a sarong-clad native girl, was cast as Lois Lane, the plucky girl reporter who somehow never caught on that mild, bespectacled Clark Kent was the man of her dreams. . . you know who. As gruff, veteran news-editor Perry White, Pierre Watkin (usually dignified officials, high-ranking armed forces officers, etc.) was well-cast, going against his usual type (as he had in other chapter-plays "Jack Armstrong" (as 'Uncle Jim' Fairfield) and "Brick Bradford" (Prof. Salisbury) getting into a lot of the action.) Tommy Bond, the perennial bully of the late 30s "Our Gang" Little Rascals' series was Jimmy Olsen. This trio would repeat their roles in the second Superman epic three years later.

For the menace, the writers pulled a fast one. They came up with the one villain Superman couldn't manhandle or toss around — it would be damaging to his ethics, or image, to physically molest a female. In this case, the female in question was the Spider Lady, played by Carol Forman, who had already done one bit as a arachnid-named menace, "The Black Widow," for Republic in 1947. She was one of those actresses who was at-

tractive but could look evil as hell when the role warranted.

Backing her up were veteran heavies George Meeker, Jack Ingram, Terry Frost, Charles King, Rusty Westcott and stunt-man Paul Stader, in one sequence. Charles Quigley was the renegade scientist Dr. Hackett, marking the second point in a declining film career, at least serial-wise. Quigley had battled the forces of evil in "Daredevils of the Red Circle," "The Iron Claw" and "The Crimson Ghost," as well as playing the hero or romantic lead in countless moderate budget pictures. But his film life was fading and, in serials, he would be playing smooth-talking heavies, usually in a pin stripe suit and a thin moustache.

As Superman's true parents, Nelson Leigh and Luana Walters were Jor-El and his wife Lara, while Robert Barron popped up as the president of the supreme council of Krypton. On earth, the Kents were portrayed by Edward Cassidy and Virginia Carroll.

Herbert Rawlinson, himself a serial star during the silent era, as well as popping up in featured or bit parts in tons of B-pictures and serials, was Prof. Graham, inventor of the deadly Relativity Reducer Ray, while Forrest Taylor was the man who introduced Kryptonite into Superman's life, Prof. Leeds.

But, naturally, the difficult part would be in casting the big cheese himself... Superman! The eventual choice was Kirk Alyn, an actor who had built a solid foundation for himself in show-business, starting out on stage around the end of vaudeville. In his stage career, up to his first big picture role in 1943-44, "Overland Mail Robbery," with Wild Bill Elliott & Gabby Hayes, Kirk had done a bit of everything, his forte popping up in musicals. He was part of a dance team, Nadine and Kirk; he was in several classic Broadway shows ("Of Thee I Sing" and "Girl Crazy" to name a couple); helped "Portia" face life on the radio; appeared in several musical reviews with such people as Imogene Coca and the late Billy DeWolfe; he even did a 53 week stint with two of the theater's wildest comedians, Olsen & Johnson, in the road company of 'Hellzapoppin!' That year alone was enough training to become Superman," Kirk recalls, "You never knew what those two guys were going to do; they literally followed their stage motto, ANYTHING FOR A LAUGH. Before I left them, they had me doing everything from singing in the audience, pretending to be an enraged husband looking for his wife's lover with a gun, to nearly freezing to death when they had me doing all the different voices for an early morning "Man-In-The-Street" — type broadcast at 7:00 am... during the worst cold spell St. Paul was having at the time! If I didn't go nuts with those guys, I had to be a Superman!" From bit appearances in such films as "You Were Never Lovelier," "Destroyer" and his featured part as the leader of the Portuguese Navy cadets in "My Sister Eileen" with Rosalind Russell & Janet Blair, Kirk appeared in other productions, usually westerns, with such players

as Sunset Carson, Smiley Burnette, Don Barry and Hopalong Cassidy. In short, he had carved out a pretty good niche for himself as a reliable player.

And then came Superman. And with it, enough headaches to send a real Superman into complete isolation in his Fortress of Solitude.

"I wasn't the first, second, fifth or sixth choice when they started looking for someone to play Superman," Kirk said. "In fact, they had tested maybe over 100 people, I believe. Athletes, weight-lifter, hefty handsome players, even wrestlers...

I even think they had a couple of powerful types who didn't speak English! Anyway, I'd gotten a call from Sam Katzman to come down to his office at Columbia and try out for the part. It seems some men from the syndicate that owned the character were at his office. The only thing wrong was that I'd let my hair grow long and grown a beard. When Sam saw me, he looked sick and had his secretary get some stills of me from... I think it was "Sweet Genevieve."

Of course, as every serial fan knows, Kirk got the part... and eventually wound up with one of the most feared curses an actor could acquire... type-casting! Rather, in this case, super-type-casting!! But more on that a little later.

Right away, Kirk found that everything, from his ego on up, would be in peril. "Any actor has an ego. It's part of what keeps him going. If you're a stage performer, it's that old applause... just like that song in the play. For a film star, it's your name in the credits and such. With 'Superman,' there was almost no such animal! Evidently the company that owned the Superman character wanted to give the idea that Superman himself was actually doing the film! The worst thing for an actor's ego is anonymity... and I got it. In spades!!"

"That agreement with Columbia resulted in my name virtually becoming non-existent. In the film credits, when the cast-list appeared, the first name was...who else?...Superman. Then the names of the actors playing Lois Lane, Jimmy Olsen, etc., followed. They didn't even have me listed as Clark Kent. The posters, at least, gave me a break. Right after Superman's name on the credits, I got billing. That did help a bit."

"I couldn't do anything to bring unfavorable publicity on the Superman image. When I was in the uniform, I couldn't wear it visibly on the lot. If I had it on, I had to wear a robe over it...that's just a few of the conditions. Of course, looking back, I can't blame them. They weren't taking any chances...at the time, and today, Superman is and was a multi-million-dollar property. The following is still tremendous. The merchandising back in '48 was, well, out-of-this-world! They had everything from Superman T-shirts to dolls, to records...even bubble gum! The Man of Steel served as a spokesman for various good citizenship campaigns. He urged kids to be a credit to the town they lived in...even got them to save. Now that's what I call a character with influence!

We shot the first Superman film in...I think...about a month. With only one or two moments, when they used a stuntman for some of the wilder pieces of business, I did my own stuff. In a pair of tights, the build of the two players shows up like a neon sign. I think they left one sequence in where Paul Stader doubled for me. But it was so obvious, I was trapped in that old uniform through that film. In fact, I wore out six uniforms in that first serial!"

Fortunately, Kirk's theater background, with a lot of dancing and some ballet, as well as his physical condition, kept him going through the gruelling filming. In fact, during one sequence where Superman takes off from an alley way, he takes off from ballet first position stance! "You know, I never realized that I'd automatically gone into that stance whenever I did that shot. But it looks pretty good on the screen," Kirk chuckles.

One of Kirk's special memories of making SUPERMAN was the day he met a man who had been a childhood idol. "When I was about nine years old, I used to go to the Hungarian Social Hall on a Saturday to watch serials...particularly the one with a man named Eddie Polo. He was my hero! He'd leap off bridges, hang from great heights, ride that white horse of his over the cliff.

We'd just finished up the last location sequences in the film and began work the next day on interiors at the studio. While I was putting on the uniform, and waiting



CAROL FORMAN AS "THE SPIDER LADY" IN COLUMBIA'S "SUPERMAN"

to be made-up, a new makeup man I'd never seen before, got to talking with me. It seems he'd seen some rushes on SUPERMAN and was really enthusiastic about the film. I hadn't seen anything yet...I think I was too scared that all the stuff we'd worked so hard on wouldn't come out right on the screen...or that I might look bad in the uniform...any one of a thousand reasons that can give an actor a case of the jitters.

Well, the make-up man's comments on the film made me feel good and I introduced myself. The next thing I knew I heard him saying, "I'm Eddie Polo." I must have looked like an axe hit me when I asked him, "You're not THE Eddie Polo...the one who was in silent pictures?" When he said yes, I was a kid again for a few minutes, remembering some of those serials like "Captain Kidd" and the one about the circus. This was the man had been the biggest inspiration to me in my career!

We talked many times after that, discussing each other's work, telling each other stories...and I never got anything signed by him...not even a simple autograph. Just goes to show what a thing like this can do to you. He's gone now, but I really treasure those times we just talked, a fan to his idol. I guess I have an idea now how many of the youngsters I've

met at conventions feel when they're talking to someone like Ray Bradbury or the STAR TREK people...or whoever's work they admire. It's quite a sensation."

During the filming, there were times when Kirk wound up wondering if it was all worth it. "When you're in that uniform about eighty percent of the time, doing all those super-stunts, even with the help of good props, staging and such, people start to get the idea that you are Superman! A couple of times I forgot. The one who really forgot was Spence Bennet. During one sequence in one of the serials, I had to carry Noel Neill and Tommy Bond...Lois Lane and Jimmy Olsen to you...out of a burning building. They were supposed to have gotten dummies for me to carry, but the 'stand-ins' weren't there, so I had to hoist Tommy and Noel under each arm and lug them out of the fire. We had a few rehearsals and Spence shot the scene. When we finished, he said the take was fine, but, "there's one thing wrong. You're straining! I saw the veins in your neck standing out!" I think my jaw fell to the ground. "Spence!" I said, "We were supposed to use dummies! They're the real thing! That's over two hundred pounds combined that I'm lugging!" Spence looks sheepish as hell after that and started calling for the dummies, asking me if I was all right, having a chair brought over...he was a wild man."

"You know, Spence got started in silent films as an actor...in fact, he was a stunt man. When we did Superman, he was still able to do quite a lot of stuff then. In fact, I don't believe he ever asked an actor to do whatever he couldn't do himself. So, naturally, he had me right where he wanted me. Here's this 'old man'...ha!...he's so old, he's young!...doing these tricks that I was supposed to do. Naturally, I couldn't let him outdo me.

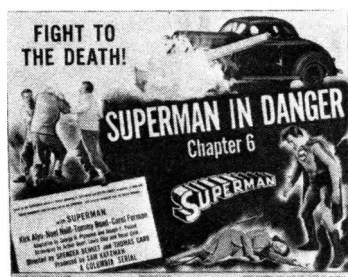
I think just about everything possible happened to me. I had to carry Noel Neill quite a bit...poor kid, always getting captured or tied up...rip doors off safes, crash through walls, overpower the heavies—remember, Superman couldn't hit them with his fists or even slap them full force; he'd take the top of their heads off!—push a broken railroad track into place...I even nearly got electrocuted!"

That incident occurred during a sequence where Lois Lane was tied up by agents of the Spider Lady and left in an experimental lab where the Reducer Ray was being kept. The machine had been short-circuited and a power-feedback was occurring, all the equipment was crackling and sparking, building up to a big explosion. The script had Superman breaking in, stopping the short and saying Lois...again! "They had a pretty impressive set-up for that lab. All the super-electrical gadgets sparking like crazy and at each side of the set the...I think they were electrical terminal poles...you know, the kind that shoots a bolt of lightning of several thousand volts from one pole to the other. Well, they started the scene and I got off the mark. Now my uniform's belt buckle was metal. So instead of going from one pole to the other, the lightning did a three-corner shot...from one pole to the belt buckle to the next. I was frozen stiff. Everybody rushed up to see if I was okay. One prop-man said it was a good thing I had rubber soles on my boots...or Superman would have become a french-fried ham!"

Even with all these super-tribulations, and more, Kirk's ego did get a bit of a boost. Variety got word of his billing situation and a special blurb appeared in



SUPERMAN



IN THE



SERIALS



the October 18, 1948 issue of the trade paper, entitled HAIL THE FORGOTTEN MAN!, revealing to one and all who read it just who was playing Superman.

As stated earlier, with Superman came the jinx of identification with the character. "When it came out, SUPERMAN got one of the biggest publicity boosts ever for a serial since, I believe, the Flash Gordon or Captain Marvel serial. DC plugged it in their magazines, the radio program had promos for it, they even had a trailer made up for the theaters that booked it, using art work from the film to plug both the serial and the radio show. Special posters were whipped up. In New York, the biggest theater chain in the state, RKO, booked SUPERMAN. Special ads would appear in the papers right by RKO's theater listings. The episode itself would play all week. Now that's quite a push."

But when the film proved to be a hit (and one of Columbia's biggest moneymakers for that year), Kirk Alyn found that he had become firmly identified with the visitor from Krypton. Not only in the minds of film fans, but with casting directors as well. "I couldn't get a job after that. I really got an idea what had happened when I went to Paramount to report for a job and the gate guard yelled out, "Hi, Superman!" If that doesn't tell you something...When the man in charge of casting at Columbia explained the situation to me—it could take about five years before the identity problem eased up—I really knew I had a dilemma even Superman couldn't solve. So, I packed my bags and headed for New York to do some theater work again.

However, Kirk did continue in pictures...to a limited degree. He'd pop up in odd bits (such as one of the ring-leaders of the workers' mutiny in George Pal's classic WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE...which also featured a young newcomer named Stuart Whitman) and do some TV work. One of his favorite TV shows was in a Gail Davis "Annie Oakley" adventure, "Annie Meets Some Tenderfeet." I really had fun with that one. The part wasn't really formed in the script, so I had an opportunity to actually create a character, making a more dimensional type instead of a stiff, cold individual that was on paper." My favorite memory is the sequence where Kirk, as the fancy-dressed dude, gives Annie's lawman boyfriend a lesson in boxing, Marquis of Queensbury-style, bobbing and weaving, landing punch after punch, while the 'hero' never laid a glove on him. For a bit of just a few minutes, it always stayed in my memory.

"The Superman character did get a lot of publicity one time...not exactly what DC wanted, however. At the time the film was making its impact in the country, some film and radio people were touring the states in a series of charity baseball games...the comedians versus the leading men, or something like that. Gary Moore was the commentator for the whole thing and we had people like, oh, Phillip Reed, Sonny Tufts, Albert Dekker, Bob Hope...old fair and square Hopalong Cassidy was the head umpire, just to make sure that no funny business went on. We even had some pretty good looking cheerleaders—all pretty actresses and starlets. Ava Gardner was one of them. The idea of the whole thing was that the game was set so that one team would have the bases loaded in the last inning; everything depended on the next man at bat. One game might have the comedians in that situation, another the leading men.

This time, in Chicago, Soldier's Field, I believe, the comedians had the bases loaded. Phil Reed was pitching for the leading men.

Anyway, the idea was that Gary Moore would really build up this 'cliffhanger,' telling the audience that this was a crucial moment, that it looked bad for the team on base, they needed a real heavy hitter and they're sending him in now. Then he'd do the "Who is it? Is it a bird? Is it a plane? NO! It's SUPERMAN!!!" shtick and I'd come out in the uniform, swinging a few bats, the cape flapping in the breeze with the crowd cheering. Then I'd get to the home plate, smash the ball with a 'super-swing' and save the day.

The ball was a trick number made of plaster. When I'd hit it, it would explode into dust, showing that Superman actually demolished the ball to win the game. Anyway, Phillip Reed was winding up for the pitch and I'm getting ready to hit...when about a dozen photographers and newsreel men start crowding around me at the plate. That wasn't so bad, except that many of them were in a position where if I swung the bat in the usual way, I'd hit 'em in the head! I signalled Phil about this and hoped he saw the situation. Well, maybe the light was in his eyes or he didn't quite catch my gestures. He didn't get the message and threw that ball. All I could do was pull my swing and raise the bat up as I did...and I missed that damn ball!!!

Have you ever heard that poem CASEY AT THE BAT...you know, "There is no joy in Mudville, Mighty Casey has struck out?" That's how I felt. I'd blown it! And the people in the stands. I never heard such laughter in all my life. They were hysterical. Some were leaning so hard over the railing, doubled over laughing, I thought they'd fall and hurt themselves. I was in shock, just standing there like an ox. The photographers had been snapping pictures all over the place.

It was Hoppy who took over from that point. He pulled out his six-shooter, fired into the air and had all the umpires gather around in a big huddle and Gary Moore announced that due to some kind of technicality, the pitch was illegal and they'd have to do it again, give him a second chance. It went off fine after that—I even threw in a bit like Babe Ruth, pointing at a spot where'd I belt the ball out of the park. The ball disintegrated, the runners came in, but the damage was already done. The photographers and newsreel people were already back at their labs with the film. They had their story. The next day the film and pictures came out showing that Superman had blown his big chance, Superman's publishers were screaming!"

When the identity problem brought Kirk's career to a literal halt, it was pretty obvious that his feelings toward the character were far from loving. But time has changed that and Kirk looks back on Superman as one of those 'fun' experiences in his career. "I think what made it so enjoyable was the people I worked with. Spence Bennet, of course. I guess of all the directors I worked with, he's one of my favorites. I did four serials with the guy—DAUGHTER OF DON Q at Republic, my first serial, the two Superman adventures and BLACKHAWK. He's one of those people you'd have to call a 'living legend in his own time.' Then there was the cast. Noel, Tommy and Pierre...he's dead now. They were perfect as Lois, Jimmy Olsen and Perry White. I think the wildest bunch of people were the 'heavies.' Carol Forman and I did two other serials together after



LOIS (NOEL NEIL) IS WITH THE MAN OF HER DREAMS (KIRK ALYN) SUPERMAN

Superman. In "Federal Agents Vs. Underworld Inc." (Republic, 1949) and "Blackhawk" (Columbia, 1952), we were always enemies. She was a beautiful woman. But she could look mean as hell when the part called for it.

Come to think of it, many of the villains I worked with were terrific. One of my all time favorites was Roy Barcroft. This guy was one of the best. He could be the nastiest s.o.b. on the screen, but off camera he was terrific. Had a wild sense of humor. Jack Ingram (he's also gone), Terry Frost, Charlie King—all those westerns! Everybody in those things had a chance at beating him up!—LeRoy Mason (he only had one eye during the 40s, you know), Rusty Wescoatt, Bud Geary. I could go on and on.

What happened when Katzman wanted to do the second Superman film? "I told him I wanted more money. He wasn't too crazy about it, but I was already identified with the character, plus I wasn't getting that much work after it, so I figured I'd better get what I could."

Anybody who has seen the Superman film when it came out will remember automatically that as soon as Superman leaped into the air, the live image changed to a cartoon zooming over the city. Why? "When they did the first film, they were kind of experimenting. I don't think Sam had ever done a super-hero film before. They decided they'd shoot all the flying footage of me in front of a process screen on the last day of filming, so they could take their time. For that piece of business, they made a steel breast plate and harness for me...after making a plaster cast of my chest! That was no fun experience, I can tell you...and then hung me up by wires. Except for my legs. It's kind of like lying on a table, flat, and then lifting your legs up and keeping them that way. Well, the special effects boys told Sam they'd opaque the wires so they couldn't be seen. I think we went into around 12 hours of work...oh, them golden hours!...before everything was in the can. But when Sam saw the rushes, all the wires showed plain as day! I would not say he was very happy with this. Anyway, with time running out, he decided to try animation. I can't remember who the artist was who did it, but I heard that they could have had two types of animation. One more dimensional and the less ex-

pensive type we used in the film. Knowing Sam and a budget, it isn't hard to guess which one he picked. But audiences apparently got into the spirit of the thing. Sure, it's crazy and not what you'd expect in a Superman film...in Captain Marvel they really did great work with those long shots of the dummy—they had the best special effects men in the business, the Lydeckers!...but the kids seemed to have fun with it. Otherwise, it wouldn't have taken off like it did...making all that money and causing Columbia to make the follow-up serial, "ATOM MAN VS. SUPERMAN."

Invariably, Kirk will be asked if he knew George Reeves and what he thought of his interpretation of Superman. "Yes, I knew George. In fact, we had the same agent, Gus Dembling. George was a nice guy and did a good job as Superman. I remember when the series was big on TV, he was on strike for more money. I think he found out what kind of a problem being identified with the Superman character could be. I got a call from the people making the show and they told me about the situation and what George was holding out for. I told them to pay him...he deserved whatever he wanted. Let's face it, what happened to me when I did the serial happened to him with that series." As far as any questions regarding Reeves' controversial death several years ago, Kirk feels, "The man is dead. I just don't feel that it's right to start speculating on something like that. The facts are up in the air and the man isn't around to speak up for himself. It's simple human decency."

In 1971, Kirk found himself in the limelight again...with a vengeance. He had been invited to attend the first Houston Convention (Houstoncon), a film-nostalgia-comic oriented gathering. "Before that invitation, I'd never heard of conventions. In fact, I didn't even know this type existed. I wasn't even sure what to do at the Texas thing." By a strange coincidence, a friend of Kirk's was involved with a comic-oriented convention being held at Disneyland and talked him into coming down on a Saturday.

Already appearing were such names as Forrest J. Ackerman (editor of FAMOUS MONSTERS OF FILMLAND), radio historian Jim Harmon and famed comic artists Jack Kirby, Jim Steranko and Mike Royer, among others. When Kirk arrived in the huge room used as the sales, or "Huckster's Room," he was escorted to the speaker's podium area. At the same time, word had leaked that the original Superman was there. While some of the speakers had drawn good crowds, the gathering of people attending was gigantic as they filled up most of the room to meet the original 'Man of Steel.' I was amazed...and terrified. Here I was on the podium, introduced to a mob of people...people of all ages and professions...and the questions began to fly." But nothing is impossible for Superman. Within minutes, Kirk Alyn had gotten into the swing of things and fielded the questions with the same ease he subdued the celluloid villains he encountered in films.

Since that fateful invitation, Kirk has been invited to countless conventions across the country. Houston has had him back two more times. The massive San Diego Comic Convention recently had Kirk and Ralph Hodges, who portrayed Kirk as a teenager in SUPERMAN, as well as appearing in three other serials (THE SEA HOUND, MYSTERIOUS ISLAND & BRUCE GENTRY) and numerous features, telling of their ex-

periences in chapter plays to a large and delighted audience.

Why does Kirk appear at these gatherings. "Well, there's always the ego factor. Any actor enjoys being remembered. But there's a bigger kick to them that turns me on. It's the people. They're terrific. This latest convention in San Diego, the main feeling around was 'good vibrations.' Everyone is turned on to having fun." This is the feeling that comes across with Kirk Alyn at these gatherings. He enjoys meeting people and the feeling is felt by those he encounters. The result is almost a mutual admiration society all around.

If this article, so far, seems a bit on the biased side, you're right! I am a Kirk Alyn booster, not only from the fact that he's Superman, but mainly from the fact that I have the good fortune to know him as a friend. There are enough anecdotes about watching him in action, making himself available for any gathering he is invited to in helping them with publicity. In San Diego and Houston, he has been volunteered for TV, newspaper and radio interviews and does them all willingly.

The following is a personal observation. A few years ago, in an article on the career of Spencer G. Bennet, a certain media-oriented magazine, in one of its first issues, referred to Kirk Alyn as the 'most inept 'Superman' of all.' If this is so, why is he considered by many people as a treasured memory of their childhood when they saw SUPERMAN in theaters? Why is he still identified so strongly with the character by youngsters who have never seen the film, despite the fact that the only example they've seen has either been the re-runs of the George Reeves series or made-for-TV cartoons (which in no way come close to the skill and smoothness of the Fleisher 40s series)? Why does one always find a large crowd of people surrounding him when he even visits a convention as another conventioneer? And, if he was as bad as the quotation implies, why is he considered by many who recall the serial, more believable than his TV successor?

When he was invited to the Houston convention back in 1971, Kirk decided to put some of his memories, not only of his SUPERMAN experiences, but of his show business career, into book form. The result is a volume entitled A JOB FOR SUPERMAN. Filled with fascinating anecdotes and tons of excellent photographs, this is a book that has proven to be a big favorite with nostalgia fans. If this seems like a plug, it is, for Kirk's book is one of those 'fun' volumes that will delight not only serial fans but anyone interested in nostalgia or show-business history. And it's written by the man who should know—he was there.

The book costs \$4.50 and will be autographed by Kirk Alyn himself. To order the book write to:

Kirk Alyn
P.O. Box 1362
Hollywood, Calif. 90028
+ +

Next issue the chapter-by-chapter synopses of the original SUPERMAN serial will be a composite of memories of the film, information from studio releases and data from the script itself.

CLASSIFIED CHAPTERS

Wanted — Tommix, Captain Midnight, Orphan Annie, Superman, The Shadow, etc. etc. — Rings, manuals, statues, wanted what have you to sell or trade? Carl Terison, Route 1, Cumberland, Maine 04021



'KIDS MATINEE' TO OFFER OLD REPUBLIC SERIALS, FEATURES

Motion picture theatres jammed with youthful audiences on Saturday afternoons will again become a familiar sight if World Entertainment Corp. is successful with its project, "Kids Matinee."

The company has put together a new film package containing 46 Republic Studios cliffhanger serials and 150 feature films. Features range from action-adventure productions to broad comedy.

The idea, according to Martin Schlusberg, WEC general sales manager, is "to recapture the fun and excitement of the Saturday matinees which were so popular in the '40s and '50s."

Serials run 12-15 episodes. They include Captain America, Zorro, The Masked Marvel, etc.

Features include 44 starring John Wayne and 87 with Roy Rogers. Others offer Laurel & Hardy, Olsen & Johnson, W. C. Fields, Clyde Beatty, and Edgar Bergen & Charlie McCarthy, etc.

*To: The readers of
Serial World
my Best To you!
'Superman'
Kul & A*